

NUTRITION

Frequently Asked Questions about Food Irradiation

What is food irradiation?

Food irradiation is a promising new food safety technology that can eliminate disease-causing germs from foods. Like pasteurization of milk and pressure cooking of canned foods, treating food with ionizing radiation can kill bacteria and parasites that may otherwise cause foodborne disease. Similar technology is used to sterilize medical devices so they can be used in surgery or implanted without risk of infection. The food that NASA astronauts eat has been sterilized by irradiation to avoid getting foodborne illness in space.

How can I tell if foods have been irradiated?

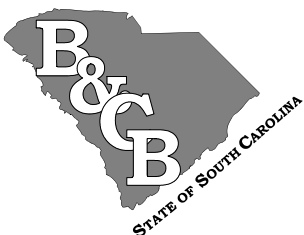
A distinctive logo has been developed for use on food packaging, in order to identify the product as irradiated. The symbol is called the "radura" and is used internationally to mean that the food in the package has been irradiated. A written description may also be present, such as "Irradiated to destroy harmful microbes." A company is not required to label a food if a minor ingredient of the food, such as a spice has been irradiated itself.



Which foods can be irradiated?

At low doses, irradiation could be used on a wide variety of foods to eliminate insect pests and as a replacement for fumigation with toxic chemicals that is routine for many foods now.

For more information on food irradiation contact the Foundation for Food Irradiation Education at <http://www.food-irradiation.com/> or the National Food Safety Database at <http://www.foodsafety.ufl.edu/index.html>.



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